

This Week in Congress

October 2, 2006

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." If you enjoy receiving this weekly email newsletter, please feel free to forward it on to others who may find it useful.

Legislation Highlights Common Sense Solutions to Aid Kansas Schools

A common theme in my meetings with Kansas educators, parents and students is the burdens created by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. In response to the challenges associated with NCLB, I introduced legislation this week to provide sensible solutions and utilize common sense ideas to make this federal program more realistic and manageable.

H.R. 6232, the Practicality in Education Act, places special emphasis on individual student progress to give a more accurate picture of improvements and problem areas. The legislation also provides states with the flexibility to consider special education and rural teachers who teach multiple academic subjects as "highly-qualified" in all subject areas if they meet certain requirements. This is particularly important in rural Kansas, where flexibility is needed in hiring school professionals who often teach several subjects and find it difficult to become certified in all areas.

In 2001, I voted against NCLB for fear it would place unnecessary restrictions on Kansas schools, increase costs to Kansas taxpayers without a corresponding improvement in the quality of education and reduce the desire of good teachers to teach. Since its passage, I have worked to improve this law and will continue my efforts to help Kansas students succeed.

Congress Passes 2007 Military Funding Legislation

Congress approved the final version of legislation authorizing and providing funding for our nation's military this week. This legislation contains many provisions to support our troops and their families, including a 2.2 percent pay raise for members of the armed forces. It also blocks the Administration's proposed fee increases for military retiree's using TRICARE, the military's health care program, as well as proposed increases in cost shares for prescriptions purchased through retail pharmacies. I was concerned that these changes would negatively impact Kansas pharmacists and veterans and I advocated in Congress to stop them. I am also pleased this legislation includes funding requested by the Army Reserve to purchase trailers produced by Landoll Corporation in Marysville.

Demanding Real Market Access for U.S. Beef Products in South Korea

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This week, I asked the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, Lee Tae-Sik, to put an end to continuing trade restrictions on United States beef products. Earlier this month, the Korean government announced its market was open to U.S. beef exports. However, recent Korean interpretations of beef health standards have yielded no meaningful or economically viable access to the Korean market.

The Korean government's failure to approach resumption of beef trade in a transparent and science-based manner violates international standards and is impossible to comply with. U.S.-Korean Free Trade Agreement negotiations are set to resume this month. Korea must reform its rules on beef trade or risk Congressional disapproval of any future trade agreement.

House Passes Legislation to Enhance Kansas Water Resources

On Wednesday, the House passed legislation I introduced earlier this year with Congressman Tom Osborne of Nebraska to study water use in the Republican River Basin. H.R. 4750, the Lower Republican River Basin Study Act, authorizes a federal study to determine solutions to

increase water supply reliability, storage and management efficiency between Harlan County Lake in Nebraska and Milford Lake in Kansas.

There is no more important resource issue in Kansas than water. The study will determine ways to enhance water flow and support the more efficient use of resources along the Republican River Basin. H.R. 4750 now awaits approval in the U.S. Senate.

Progress Made to Continue Hiring Physicians to Serve Rural Kansans

H.R. 4997, the Physicians for Underserved Areas Act, was approved this week by the House Judiciary Committee. This amended legislation would reauthorize the J-1 Visa waiver program for two years. The J-1 Visa waiver program allows foreign-born, U.S.-educated physicians to serve in areas that have a shortage of physicians and is vital to ensuring Kansans have access to health care. I look forward to this bill passing the House later this year.

Congratulating Kansas Physician Rick Kellerman

I enjoyed the opportunity to attend the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) board installation luncheon this week and congratulate Dr. Rick Kellerman of Wichita on his selection as President of the organization. Dr. Kellerman is a Hays native and former physician in my hometown of Plainville. I rely on his healthcare experience and expertise. AAFP will be well served by Dr. Kellerman.

Meeting with Kansas High School Students from Washington, D.C.

Again this week, I met with Kansas high school students from Washington, D.C., via video teleconferencing. I enjoyed the opportunity to meet with Mr. Bob Eyestone's class from Hugoton High School in Hugoton and Mr. James Johnston's class from South Barber High School in Kiowa. I visited with students about energy prices, the war in Iraq and my responsibilities as a Member of Congress.

Veterans' Forum in Northeast Kansas to be Held on Wednesday

I will host a forum for veterans this week in Junction City to discuss health care and benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Members of my staff will be on hand along with representatives from the VA to handle any concerns that veterans or their families may have. The event will be Wednesday, October 4, from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. at the City Municipal Building, 700 Jefferson Street. All area veterans, as well as other members of the public, are encouraged to attend. For more information, [click here](#) .

Visiting Kansas Communities

Enterprise: I stopped in Enterprise on Monday to visit with local officials and community members. I had coffee with area residents at the Recreational Vehicle Center and then stopped at the Dickinson County Bank and City Hall. I visited with residents about livestock insurance, the next farm bill, oil prices, satellite radio and the expansion at Fort Riley.

Clay Center: This weekend, I participated in the Piotique Fall Festival in downtown Clay Center. It was a beautiful day for a parade and an estimated 5,000 people were in attendance. Thank you to Larry Smith for driving me in the parade.

In the Office

Chancellor Robert Hemenway was in the office this week to discuss the future plans of the University of Kansas' Transportation Research Center. Representing KU Medical Center, Amy Jordan Wooden of Kansas City stopped by to introduce herself and explain funding concerns

about the Training for Diversity program. Mike Murray of Kansas City was in to tell me about Embark, a company that provides local phone service to many rural Kansas communities. We discussed the need to make sure the Universal Service Fund, which helps provide for communications in rural areas, is appropriately funded.

KU Chemistry Professor Joe Heppert was in to discuss the university's role in the American Competitiveness Initiative program and to talk about ways to increase the number of math and science majors that enter the education profession. Melanie Johnson of Olathe, Mike Dreiling of Prairie Village, Robert Pitkin of Overland Park and Pat Shelley of Shawnee were in with the Associated Builders and Contractors. Salina's Head Start Director Korey Hensley was in the office to tell me about the success they are having with their students and families and to advocate for funding for their programs.

Members of the Kansas Academy of Family Physicians were in to advocate for providing incentives for medical students to become family physicians and to talk about the importance of adequately reimbursing doctors for the care they provide to Medicare patients. In with the group were Brian Holmes of Abilene; Mike and Carla Kennedy of Kansas City; Carolyn Gaughan of Wichita; Daniel and Karen Sanchez of Plainville with their children, Makayla and Nathaniel; and Doug Gruenbacher of Quinter. Karl Peterjohn of Wichita also stopped by this week to visit.

Several Kansans were in this week for a tour of the United States Capitol. Among them were Jarrod and Lisa Shivers of Hutchinson; Robert and Sandy Law, originally of Tipton, with their sons, Robert and Nicholas; Dr. Lynn Fisher of Plainville; Lee Fisher and Jerry Braun of Hays; and Kris and Melinda Kimple of Beloit with their son, Travis. In from Prairie Village were Christian and Kara Tramp and Elizabeth Hoffman, as well as Bob and Corrine Dale of Kansas City and Jane Brown of Topeka. Charlie Thomas and Sue Peterson of Manhattan also toured the Capitol with Sue's parents, Bill and Phyllis, of Abilene.

Very truly yours,

Jerry